

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated February 21, 2006. Claims 1 to 23 and 27 to 43 are pending in the application, of which Claims 1, 7, 15, 16, 17, 23, 27, 33, 39 and 40 are independent. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Claim 16 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101. Amendments to Claim 16 are believed to obviate the rejection. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 22 to 27, 29, 33, 35 and 39 to 43 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,163,383 (Ota), and Claims 1 to 14, 16 to 23 and 25 to 43 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,313,921 (Kadowaki). The rejections are respectfully traversed.

The present invention relates to user authentication in print processing. According to one feature of the invention, user authentication is based on information identifying an application which has issued an instruction for printing. Accordingly, the invention can obviate the need for a user to input a user ID and password for each printing operation, and can improve security by making authentication based on print information embedded in a file or information of an application program.

Referring specifically to the claims, independent Claim 1 defines an authentication method in a print process that requires user authentication. The method comprises obtaining information identifying an application which has issued an instruction to print electronic data of a print object, and executing user authentication for approving or

accounting for an output of the electronic data based on the information identifying the application.

Independent Claim 7 is a system claim that substantially corresponds to independent Claim 1.

The cited references are not seen to disclose or to suggest the features of Claims 1 and 7, and in particular, are not seen to disclose or to suggest the feature of executing user authentication for approving or accounting for an output of the electronic data based on the information identifying the application.

In entering the rejections of Claims 1 and 7 over Ota, the Office Action asserts that: “The operation instructing means/job producing unit when initialized by a user would spawn a print process/print job, which would include the user authentication information and the data to be printed amongst other things. These print processes/print jobs have a process id associated with them so that the operating system task manager/schedule routine can differentiate between the different processes. The process id would meet the limitation of information identifying the application.” (Office Action, pages 4 and 5).

However, Ota does not disclose a “process id.” Accordingly, the Office Action’s assertion that a “process id” is disclosed in Ota must rely on the principle of inherency, and therefore, must meet the significant burden that “the allegedly inherent characteristic necessarily flows from the teachings of the applied prior art.” (MPEP § 2112(IV) (citations omitted) (emphasis in original)). Applicant submits that the Office Action fails to meet this burden.

Specifically, while the Office Action asserts that Ota's allegedly inherent disclosure of a "process id" would meet the limitation of information identifying the application, the Office Action fails even to allege that Ota discloses executing user authentication for approving or accounting for an output of electronic data based on the "process id," much less provide any basis in fact and/or technical reasoning to reasonably support a determination that Ota's alleged "process id" necessarily discloses this feature. Accordingly, Applicant contends that the Office Action fails even to allege that Ota discloses the above feature, much less meets the significant burden required to determine that the feature is inherent in Ota.

Furthermore, Applicant submits that even if a "process id" is inherent in Ota and that the "process id" could be viewed as information identifying the application (and Applicant does not concede these points), Ota fails to disclose or to suggest executing user authentication for approving or accounting for an output of electronic data based on information identifying the application.

In particular, Ota relates to a method of print processing in which a user information section produces a user identification and transmits a print operation with the user identification attached. Figure 2 of Ota shows a access controlling unit 15, which judges whether a user that issued a print job has authority for operating the print job. (column 7, lines 60 to 63). Figures 3(A) and 3(B) of Ota show examples of the data used in judging whether the user is authorized, such as "USER IDENTIFIER" column 122, such as a user name, and "USER ENVIRONMENT IDENTIFIER" column 121, such as a domain name. (column 8, line 56 to column 9, line 20). However, a "process id" is not among the data used in Ota. Accordingly, even assuming an allegedly inherent "process

id” is equivalent to information identifying the application, Ota is not seen to disclose or to suggest executing user authentication for approving or accounting for an output of the electronic data based on information identifying the application.

In entering the rejections of Claims 1 and 7 over Kadowaki, the Office Action indicates “The explanation of how operating systems issuing print jobs meet the new claim limitation, given with respect to the Ota reference, is also applicable to the Kadowaki reference” Accordingly, the Office Action relies on the principle of inherency with respect to Kadowaki.

As with Ota, Applicant traverses the rejections over Kadowaki for failing even to allege that Kadowaki discloses executing user authentication for approving or accounting for an output of the electronic data based on the information identifying the application, much less meet the burden required to determine that the feature is inherent in Kadowaki.

On the contrary, Kadowaki relates to a method of including personalizing information in a print job. Figure 11B of Kadowaki shows examples of personalizing information, such as an upper-limit number of printed sheets, an available function list, setup data relating to a normal/abnormal termination report, user switch data, and a user name. (column 13, lines 15 to 23). A printer 1 performs printing based on the personalizing information. However, Kadowaki’s personalizing information is not seen to disclose or to suggest executing user authentication for approving or accounting for an output of the electronic data based on information identifying the application.

Accordingly, independent Claims 1 and 7 are believed to be allowable.

Independent Claim 16 defines a printer driver, stored on a computer-readable medium, in an authentication system which executes a print process that requires user authentication. The printer driver comprises a receiving step of receiving information identifying an application which has issued an instruction to print electronic data of a print object, a selecting step of selecting information required for user authentication from the information identifying the application received in the receiving step, and a sending step of sending print information appended with the selected information to a printer.

As noted above, neither Ota nor Kadowaki are seen to disclose or to suggest executing user authentication for approving or accounting for an output of the electronic data based on information identifying the application. For similar reasons, neither Ota nor Kadowaki are seen to disclose or to suggest selecting information required for user authentication from received information identifying the application. Accordingly, independent Claim 16 is believed to be allowable.

Independent Claim 17 defines a server in an authentication system which executes a print process that requires user authentication. The server comprises means of receiving information identifying an application which has issued an instruction to print electronic data of a print object from a printer driver via a network, means of checking a user authentication result by comparing the received information with user authentication information which is registered in advance, and means of returning the user authentication result to the printer driver via the network.

Independent Claim 39 is directed to a method that corresponds generally to the server of Claim 17.

As noted above, neither Ota nor Kadowaki are seen to disclose or to suggest executing user authentication for approving or accounting for an output of the electronic data based on information identifying the application. For similar reasons, neither Ota nor Kadowaki are seen to disclose or to suggest checking a user authentication result by comparing received information identifying an application with user authentication information which is registered in advance. Accordingly, independent Claims 17 and 39 are believed to be allowable.

Independent Claim 23 defines a printer in an authentication system which executes a print process that requires user authentication. The printer comprises means of receiving information identifying an application which has issued an instruction to perform the print process from a printer driver together with print information, means of inputting user authentication information, and means of executing user authentication on the basis of a comparison result of the information identifying the application and the input user authentication information.

Independent Claim 40 is directed to a method that corresponds generally to the printer of Claim 23.

As noted above, neither Ota nor Kadowaki are seen to disclose or to suggest executing user authentication for approving or accounting for an output of the electronic data based on information identifying the application. For similar reasons, neither Ota nor Kadowaki are seen to disclose or to suggest executing user authentication on the basis of a comparison result of information identifying the application and the input user authentication information. Accordingly, independent Claims 23 and 40 are believed to be allowable.

Independent Claim 27 defines an information processing apparatus communicating with an external information processing apparatus performing a user authentication for a print process. The apparatus comprises extracting means of extracting information identifying an application which has issued an instruction to print electronic data of a print object, and output means of outputting the information extracted by the extracting means to the external information processing apparatus to use the information for a user authentication for the print process.

Independent Claim 33 is directed to a method that corresponds generally to the apparatus of Claim 27.

As noted above, neither Ota nor Kadowaki are seen to disclose or to suggest executing user authentication for approving or accounting for an output of the electronic data based on information identifying the application. For similar reasons, neither Ota nor Kadowaki are seen to disclose or to suggest outputting information identifying an application to an external information processing apparatus to use the information for a user authentication for a print process. Accordingly, independent Claims 27 and 33 are believed to be allowable.

The other claims in the application are each dependent from the independent claims and are believed to be allowable over the applied references for at least the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

Turning now to a formal matter, Applicant's representative respectfully requests an interview with the Examiner prior to the next action in the application, in the

case that the next action is not an allowance of all pending claims. Applicant's representative will contact the Examiner to schedule the interview in due course.

No other matters being raised, it is believed that the entire application is fully in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously solicited.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa, California office by telephone at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address given below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'E. Kmett', is written over a horizontal line.

Edward A. Kmett
Attorney for Applicant
Registration No.: 42,746

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10112-3800
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200

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